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FLOOR DEBATE

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LB 833

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Thank you, Senator Suttle. (Visitors introduced.) Further debate on AM1850 to LB 833? Senator Kremer, followed by Senator Wickersham and Senator Stuhr. Senator Kremer

SENATOR KREMER: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the body. I'd like to thank Senator Bromm and the Education Committee also for all the work that they've done on this bill. Since I've prioritized it, I've had more contacts and more people tell me how important it is that the balance of these schools are connected up with the distance learning equipment, that they can utilize this for many, many opportunities. Just recently a school said that they were unable to hire a Spanish teacher, and as their enrollment is declining, needing to...or the possibility of maybe cutting out programs, and they did not want to do that as Spanish or any other foreign language is required for college entrance. With the distance learning projects and the schools connected up would enable them to hook up with some other school that has a Spanish teacher and use the...utilize that service, or else the ESU's could also even maybe hire a Spanish teacher that could be...could be connected up to many schools at one time. So I think it has great opportunity, not only for our small schools, but I think for also schools of all sizes. So I think it's very important that we do that. And I also would concur with Senator Bromm that I really do not have a preference of which part of the fund that it comes from. With the...from the QEIP fund, the 70 percent, it's a smaller portion comes from there, I think Senator Bromm mentioned 20 percent of that would go toward this, and if we went into the grant fund portion, which is the 20 percent, it would take a bigger...most of that grant funds for a two-year period. The maximum that could be used for the distance learning project is \$1.5 million per year for the two years, then it could go back to the grant. So I really do not have a preference where it comes from, I think that should be left up to the body. The main thing is that we can get it done and completed so that all our schools are on equal footing. I think another thing that has been mentioned to me how it can be used is that adult education, some of our smaller towns can utilize some of the equipment in the schools and in the rooms for adult education, and also even college level courses could be taught in our high schools. So I